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# NEWS RELEASE

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## Distinguished Service Awards to be Presented at Bench Bar Conference

***Winners are Justice Sandra Day O'Connor,  
Justice Norman Epstein, and Court Executive Ken Torre***

Anaheim—Chief Justice Ronald M. George and Administrator Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey today presented the Judicial Council of California's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Awards, at the 2007 California Bench Bar Biannual Conference.

The awards are given to those who demonstrate extraordinary leadership and make significant contributions to the administration of justice in California. The recipients follow.

### **Jurist of the Year Award**

*This award honors members of the judiciary for their extraordinary dedication to the highest principles of the administration of justice.*

**Presiding Justice Norman L. Epstein**, Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four (Los Angeles), has achieved many accomplishments as a jurist, legal scholar, judicial educator, and court leader during a distinguished professional career spanning nearly 50 years. A judge for more than 30 years, he served on both the Los Angeles municipal and superior courts. In 1990 he was appointed to the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, and in 2004 was named presiding justice of Division Four.

A statewide leader in judicial education, Justice Epstein has lectured at the B.E. Witkin Judicial College for more than 25 years, serving as associate dean from 1980 to 1981 and as dean from 1982 to 1983. He continues to lecture widely to judges and attorneys on criminal law, evidence, civil practice, and other topics and is co-author of leading treatises on criminal law, civil procedures, and evidence. He has twice been the recipient of the Bernard Jefferson Award for distinguished judicial education.

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## **Judicial Administration Award**

*This award honors individuals in judicial administration for significant contributions to and leadership in their profession.*

**Mr. Ken Torre**, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Contra Costa County, has demonstrated leadership and advocacy in state court administration and has made significant contributions to the Judicial Council's strategic plan by advancing access, fairness, and diversity; modernization of management and administration; and the quality of justice.

Mr. Torre is well known for his contributions in assisting with new initiatives of the state jury system, advancing improved technology in the state courts, and supporting continuing education in judicial administration. He was recently appointed director of Judicial Administration Programs at California State University at Sacramento, a part-time position. His goal is to create a nationally recognized master's program in judicial administration and to expand the public's awareness of the field of judicial administration as a challenging and fulfilling career path.

## **Bernard E. Witkin Amicus Curiae Award**

*This award honors individuals other than members of the judiciary for their outstanding contributions to the courts of California.*

**Justice Sandra Day O'Connor**, retired Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was selected for this award for her outstanding service on the U.S. Supreme Court and for her vital leadership in preserving the independence of the judiciary, helping to inspire and guide the efforts of California's bench and bar.

Justice O'Connor has appeared throughout the nation to urge support for the independence and impartiality of the courts. In 2006, she was the keynote speaker at the 2006 California Judicial Summit, a leadership conference sponsored by the Judicial Council.

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*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.*